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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRISTINA 000177

DEPT FOR DRL, INL, EUR/SCE; NSC FOR TEPPER; DOJ FOR PEEBLES
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/06/2013

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SUBJECT: AAK ADAMANT ON INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION

CLASSIFIED BY COM RENO HARNISH; REASON 1.5 B/D.

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. IN A FEBRUARY 6 MEETING MARKED BY FRANK EXCHANGES, COM TOLD AAK PRESIDENT HARADINAJ THAT HIS PARTY'S DRAFT DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WAS AN UNWELCOME AND POTENTIALLY DESTABILIZING DIVERSION THAT LEAVES THE REAL BUSINESS OF GOVERNMENT SADLY NEGLECTED. COM ASKED HARADINAJ TO CONSIDER WITHDRAWING IT FROM THE ASSEMBLY AGENDA. HARADINAJ ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE DECLARATION HAS NO CHANCE OF ENACTMENT THIS YEAR BUT INSISTED ITS PRESENT VALUE WOULD BE IN FRAMING A DEBATE THAT WOULD REACH FRUITION IN FUTURE YEARS. HE AGREED THAT KOSOVO'S GOVERNMENT HAD TO DO A BETTER JOB AND CONFIDED THAT, TO THIS END, ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT DACI IS WORKING WITH BRITISH INTERMEDIARIES TO ARRANGE A MEETING IN SWITZERLAND WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS FROM SERBIA TO DISCUSS PRAGMATIC ISSUES OF MUTUAL CONCERN. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) COM, DPO, AND ECON-POL CHIEF MET ON FEBRUARY 6 WITH ALLIANCE FOR THE FUTURE OF KOSOVO (AAK) PRESIDENT RAMUSH HARADINAJ TO URGE RECONSIDERATION OF HIS PARTY'S DRAFT DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE (ENGLISH TRANSLATION FORWARDED PREVIOUSLY). COM TOLD HARADINAJ THE USG CONSIDERS BOTH THE AAK DRAFT AND SERBIAN PM DJINDJIC'S CALL FOR FINAL STATUS NEGOTIATIONS TO BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE "MANUFACTURED CRISES" THAT ARE PARTICULARLY UNWELCOME IN WASHINGTON AT THIS TIME WHEN USG'S FOCUS IS OUT OF EUROPE. COM SAID NEITHER INITIATIVE HAS ANY PROSPECT WHATSOEVER OF GAINING USG SUPPORT. THE MISGUIDED EFFORTS, HE ADDED, STOOD TO BENEFIT ONLY EXTREMIST ENEMIES OF PEACE IN KOSOVO WHO WOULD DELIGHT IN WATCHING DISCORD GROW BETWEEN KOSOVO'S ALBANIAN AND SERB COMMUNITIES. FINALLY, COM URGED HARADINAJ TO CONSIDER THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S SERIOUS SUPPORT FOR KOSOVO WAS NOT BEING MATCHED BY SIMILARLY SERIOUS EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE KOSOVARs WHO HEAD THE PROVISIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF SELF-GOVERNMENT (PISG). HE SAID THE KOSOVO ASSEMBLY IN PARTICULAR, WITH A FEW NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS, HAD SHOWN LITTLE INTEREST AND LESS EXPERTISE IN THE BUSINESS OF GOVERNMENT AND URGED HARADINAJ AND COLLEAGUES TO GET ABOUT THE ESSENTIAL IF MUNDANE GROUNDWORK NECESSARY TO PRIVATIZATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATHER THAN GRANDSTANDING ON INDEPENDENCE.

¶3. (C) HARADINAJ REPLIED IN SIMILAR CIVIL YET FRANK TONES. TAKING AS HIS POINT OF DEPARTURE THE RECENT SERBIA-MONTENEGRO PREAMBLE REFERENCE TO KOSOVO AS PART OF SERBIA, HE SAID "A SIMILAR THING HAPPENED IN 1974 WHEN THE FRY CONSTITUTION REFERRED TO KOSOVO AS PART BOTH OF YUGOSLAVIA AND SERBIA."

THEN, AS NOW, HE SAID THE KOSOVARS WERE TOLD THAT THE REFERENCE WAS MEANINGLESS BUT KOSOVO THEN SPENT DECADES TRYING TO GET OUT OF THOSE BOXES. THE IC, HE SAID, DID NOT GO TO BELGRADE ON THE SERBIA-MONTENEGRO CHARTER AS IT IS NOW COMING TO PRISTINA TO SAY, "THIS IS DESTABILIZING; DON'T DO THIS." HE AGREED THE PISG MUST DO A BETTER JOB AND OFFERED TO REDOUBLE EFFORTS BUT DID NOT SEE PRAGMATIC GOVERNANCE AS INCONSISTENT WITH A DEBATE ON INDEPENDENCE. HE VOLUNTEERED THAT KOSOVO WOULD NOT ACHIEVE INDEPENDENCE THIS YEAR BUT INSISTED THAT MOVING THE DISCUSSION IN THIS DIRECTION IS A SIGN THAT A "MATURING" AAK IS READY TO "TELL OUR FRIENDS NOT JUST WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR." HE SUGGESTED THAT THE USG SHOULD JUST ALLOW THE DECLARATION DEBATE TO UNFOLD SO AS NOT TO BE DISTRACTED FROM PRESSING CONCERNS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD. COM ASSURED HIM THE USG WOULD CONTINUE TO DEVOTE ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO KOSOVO AND WOULD NOT STAND BY AND ALLOW PRISTINA-BELGRADE TENSIONS TO MOUNT OVER MANUFACTURED CRISES.

PRISTINA-BELGRADE ASSEMBLY INITIATIVE

14. (C) IN REACTION TO COM RECURRING SUGGESTION THAT THE PISG SHOULD FOCUS ON GOVERNANCE OVER INDEPENDENCE, HARADINAJ CONFIDED THAT (ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT NEXHAT) DACI ON FEBRUARY 5 TOLD HIM HE WAS WORKING WITH BRITISH INTERMEDIARIES ON A PLAN FOR THE PARLIAMENTS OF KOSOVO AND SERBIA TO BEGIN CONSIDERATION OF TECHNICAL ISSUES OF MUTUAL CONCERN. DACI AND A KOSOVO ASSEMBLY DELEGATION ARE MAKING PLANS TO TRAVEL TO SWITZERLAND FOR NGO-SPONSORED MEETINGS. THE PLAN CALLS FOR A DELEGATION FROM THE SERBIAN PARLIAMENT TO TRAVEL TO SWITZERLAND AT THE SAME TIME ON UNRELATED BUSINESS AND FOR DACI AND HIS SERBIAN COUNTERPART TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE TRIPS TO MEET AND PAVE THE WAY FOR MORE FORMAL PARLIAMENTARY CONTACT TO FOCUS ON TECHNICAL TOPICS SELECTED FOR LACK OF POLITICAL OVERTONE.

HARNISH